

Maryland Youth: Ema Klugman

get to me and am a bit bummed. I learned that I need to go over my plan more than I did.”

In the end, the pair finished in 33rd place and Klugman earned a special award for being the highest placed young rider. They were also the only current Maryland pair to complete the event. “Just to get through it was an accomplishment,” she added. “It also showed me that I am capable to ride a cross-country course that is that hard. It reassures you that your training is actually working.”

A Maryland Autumn

While Ben gets the next few months off, Klugman is focusing on the other horses in her barn, especially two promising young horses that she thinks will be her next five-star horses. “Bronte Beach is eight years old and just did her first Advanced,” Klugman stated. “She is really talented and classy.” The pair won the CCI3*-L at Virginia Horse Trials International last year and Klugman hopes to step up to the four-star level this year with her. “The goal is that she’ll be my first Badminton or Burghley horse,” she added.

Klugman’s other young horse is RF Redfern, a seven-year-old that was bred for jumpers. “She’s a machine!” Klugman said. “She’s small in stature but has won eight out of 10 events so far.” Klugman joked that with the pair of mares, “we have some bit of girl power going on!”

With Ben, Klugman said she will wait and see how he feels after his summer vacation. “He’s done a huge amount for us so he can retire if needed but I know him so well. So if he feels good, I’ll start working him towards the Maryland 5-Star.”

Klugman will be attending George Washington Law School this August as she continues with her eventing career and training out of her family’s Snowy River Farm.

The Importance of Trainers

When asked what is the biggest advice she has for other young riders looking to compete at the top levels of eventing, she said, “You need to have really good training from someone who knows what they are doing.”

“I’ve never considered myself a natural rider,” she added. “You have to have really good training to succeed at this level.” For Klugman, that trainer was Packy McGaughan. “He got me to focus not on results, but on how to continue to improve.” Klugman went on to say how he taught her the importance of how to ride precisely and correctly. “All the little things [Packy] would get after me about ... it all helped me get to the five-star level. If anyone has access to someone like Packy, they can get there too.”

Klugman also pointed out that young riders should seek out trainers who have good records with training young riders. “I mean, just look at the entries at Kentucky this year... Daniel [Clasing], Matt [Flynn], Lillian [Heard] and Marilyn [Little] all rode with him.”

Since McGaughan’s death in March 2020, Klugman has been training with Marilyn Little and Hilary Moore Hebert. “Marilyn was a huge help to me all week [at Kentucky] helping me in general navigate the event,” Klugman said.

In addition to proper training, Klugman says to be prepared “to work hard, be dedicated and try to make it work.” She added, “This sport is incredibly difficult. Even when you are winning and going clean, you still need to work at it.”